# Ukrainian journalist Viktoria Roshchyna died after severe torture in Russian detention



The body of Ukrainian journalist Viktoria Roshchyna, who disappeared while detained in Russia, was returned to Kyiv in February 2024 bearing evidence of severe torture and mutilation, according to an international investigation and reports from the Ukrainian Prosecutor General’s Office.

Roshchyna, aged 27, had vanished in August 2023 after being detained while reporting on allegations that Russia was operating a network of unofficial detention centres in occupied Ukrainian territories. She was held primarily at the Taganrog SIZO-2 prison in Rostov, Russia, a facility infamously dubbed Russia’s "Guantanamo" due to its brutal treatment of detainees.

Her body was initially handed over as that of an unidentified male during a prisoner exchange between Russia and Ukraine. However, subsequent DNA testing confirmed the remains were hers, revealing extensive torture: her eyeballs, brain, and part of her throat had been removed. Forensic experts also discovered her head was shaved, her neck bore bruises, and her feet showed burn marks. A tag bearing her surname was attached to her shin. Medical examiners found a broken rib and possible signs of electric shock.

Roshchyna’s father, Volodymyr Roshchyn, received notification of her death in October 2023 but held out hope until her body was returned and positively identified in April. He had also received a letter from Russian authorities that acknowledged her death without providing details about the circumstances.

An investigation into her captivity has revealed that Roshchyna was held incommunicado, a serious violation of international human rights law. Initially detained in the cities of Enerhodar and Melitopol, she was later transferred in critical condition to the Taganrog detention centre under the control of Russia’s Federal Security Service. According to testimonies, she refused a deal offered by her captors, stating she “always stuck to her principles.”

The UN has described Russia’s treatment of detainees as “disturbing” and “extreme in scale.” Alice Edwards, the UN special rapporteur on torture, told the Washington Post she had documented “serious cases of torture, including mock executions, all types of beatings, electricity being applied to ears and genitals and other parts of the body, waterboarding, as well as threats and actual rapes and sexual violence.”

Former detainees recounted harrowing conditions at Taganrog SIZO-2, where prisoners were kept in cramped 10ft-by-16ft cells with several others, subjected to constant surveillance, beatings, and other abuses. Inmates were prohibited from laughing and often found cockroaches in their meals. Twice daily, prisoners were forced into stress positions while guards beat them. Those who resisted were subjected to further torture, including suspension from bars while being beaten.

One former detainee told ForbiddenStories, “There’s another room where we were hanged for 10 to 15 minutes... You’re hanging, and you’re being hit on five points. You can’t do anything.” Another described being placed in an electric chair twice, receiving 380 volts through clamps attached between toes while doused in water.

In June 2023, Roshchyna reportedly went on hunger strike. Her health deteriorated rapidly, leading to a month-long hospitalisation off-site. Upon her return to Taganrog, she was isolated in a separate cell and appeared too weak to respond to guards’ provocations. In late August, her father received a brief phone call, during which Russian guards urged him to convince her to eat to avoid starvation.

She was removed from her cell on 8 September, a date a former cellmate believed was linked to preparations for her release. However, on 10 October, Russian authorities informed her father of her death.

Ukrainian prosecutors have launched an investigation into Roshchyna’s death, treating it as a possible war crime. The case brings into sharp focus the harsh realities faced by detainees in Russia’s unofficial detention facilities amid ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine. The Daily Mail is reporting this detailed account based on investigations and testimonies related to the case.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

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* <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraine-investigates-death-journalist-russian-detention-2024-10-11/> - This piece discusses Ukraine's investigation into the death of journalist Viktoria Roshchyna, highlighting her disappearance, subsequent death in Russian detention, and the international response.
* <https://euromaidanpress.com/2025/03/03/she-couldnt-even-lift-her-head-witness-describes-roshchynas-condition-in-russian-prison/> - This article provides a witness account describing the severe torture and deteriorating health of Viktoria Roshchyna during her imprisonment in Russia.
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* <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/europe/ukraine-opens-war-crime-probe-over-reporters-death/articleshow/114152832.cms> - This article covers Ukraine's initiation of a war crime investigation into the death of journalist Viktoria Roshchyna, emphasizing the international concern over her treatment in Russian captivity.
* <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukrainian-journalist-dies-russian-detention-officials-say-2024-10-10/> - This piece reports on the confirmation of Viktoria Roshchyna's death in Russian detention, detailing her background and the circumstances leading to her death.
* <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14660997/Ukrainian-journalists-body-returned-home-Russia-without-eyes-brain-bag-labelled-unidentified-male.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data